

Duxbury Clipper, Thursday, July 12, 1973

In 1792, before there was any highway along the shore of Duxbury Bay, Joshua Cushing bought 6 acres off the east end of Ebenezer Delano's farm, starting at what is now Washington St. and running to the bay along both sides of a cartway that is now Water St. It was more land than Joshua needed, so 2 years later he sold off the 4 acres north of the cartway and in 1808 he sold a narrow strip on the south side of Joseph White, a house lot ran to the bay but did not go as far west as the new highway.

Joseph White was a homewright, an unusual term when most carpenters were called housewrights. If homewright indicated a more careful carpenter than a housewright it was not evident in the house he built. It was a small house on the narrow sloping lot, with the room layout similar to most houses of that time -- 2 front rooms, a long kitchen with perhaps a small bed room, buttry and pantry, a very modest house. So many changes and improvements have been made in the last 50 years that it is hard to tell just how the exterior originally was but it surely was a small plain house, probably in considerable contrast to those around it.

It is frustrating that all subsequent deeds tell so little about the house, barely mentioning it but going into great detail about who was to maintain the fence, who should have a right of way across the property, and who the privileges of the right of way west by the cartway and a lane to "the road to the meeting house," now Surplus St. Washington St. was then called "the way leading to Blue Fish River Bridge" and the lane across the old Delano farm is Bumble Bee Lane.

Joseph White sold in 1823 to Gershom B. Weston, son of Ezra II and a member of the family shipping business. According to the Weston Memorial he was living on St. George St. so this purchase may have been for investment, although the Westons often bought property for no apparent reason. Before long he sold to Simon Whitney who seems to have been a painter when he bought but who was listed as musician when he died 20 years later of smallpox. Musician quite likely meant that he played the violin so perhaps the house in the 1830s knew gay times when Simon played his fiddle for a singing school or dancing class, both of which are known to have been held in the new village. Why not in Simon Whitney's house?

Through the rest of the 1800s the several owners, 10 in all, did little to the old house. From stories told about a hand laundry in the basement on the sloping side, operated late in that succession of owners, and other tales of owners, there seems to have been no one of any particular wealth in the house, which is fortunate in that it stayed much as it was built for nearly a 100 years. All through the years when the large houses were going up along the new highway this house stayed small and sometimes neglected. Even the first summer people in town and the rise of boarding houses had no affect on this house. Only after the turn of the century when the location and probably the charm of the old house put it in the hands of new owners did changes appear.

Additions, improvements, and conveniences have been made, with impressive results and pleasing effect. Joseph White's house, built in 1808, still stands on its narrow lot south of the still narrow lane, now the retirement home of Henry H. and Alice Pierce.

Dorothy Wentworth, Researcher



JOSEPH WHITE 1808

D.R.H.

